

Message Text

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12
ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 SCCT-01 PM-03 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15

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R 180608Z JUN 75
FM AMEMBASSY CANBERRA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5980
INFO AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMCONSUL MELBOURNE
AMCONSUL SYDNEY

C O N F I D E N T I A L CANBERRA 3960

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: AS, XF, PINT, PFOR, EG
SUBJ: PLO REPRESENTATIVE VISITS AUSTRALIA

1. PLO REPRESENTATIVE GAMEL EL-SURANI VISITED AUSTRALIA JUNE 7 THROUGH 14. EL-SURANI'S VISIT WAS ARRANGED BY THE EGYPTIAN EMBASSY AND MR. BILL HARTLEY, THE LEFT WING MEMBER OF THE ALP'S VICTORIAN EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE. DURING HIS VISIT TO AUSTRALIA, ELSURANI MET PRIME MINISTER WHITLAM FOR 45 MINUTES ON JUNE 10 AND WAS GIVEN A LUNCHEON THE SAME DAY BY THE ACTING HEAD OF THE DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, N.F. PARKINSON.

2. EL-SURANI, WHO IS ALLEGED TO RUN THE CAIRO HEADQUARTERS OF THE PLO, WAS GIVEN AN AUSTRALIAN VISA IN AN EGYPTIAN DIPLOMATIC PASSPORT WHICH IDENTIFIED HIM AS A REPRESENTATIVE OF THE ARAB LEAGUE. THE REQUEST FOR THE VISA WAS MADE ON HIS BEHALF BY THE EGYPTIAN EMBASSY IN CANBERRA.

3. THE ONLY INCIDENT WHICH MARRED EL-SURANI'S VISIT TO AUSTRALIA WAS A CONFRONTATION BETWEEN PRO-PLO AND PRO-LEBANESE FACTIONS WHICH OCCURRED WHEN HE VISITED THE LEBANESE CONSULATE IN SYDNEY
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ON JUNE 8.

4. DFA OFFICERS WERE NOT IMPRESSED WITH EL-SURANI WHO SPENT MOST OF HIS TIME TALKING AND DID VERY LITTLE LISTENING. DFA STAFFERS STATED THAT DURING HIS MEETING WITH PRIME MINISTER WHITLAM, EL-SURANI TALKED SO FAST FOR SO LONG THAT EVEN THE PRIME MINISTER COULDN'T GET A WORD IN EDGEWISE, A COMPLIMENT TO EL-SURANI'S WIND IF NOT TO HIS WISDOM. HAD EL-SURANI BEEN SLIGHTLY LESS VOCAL, WHITLAM WOULD PROBABLY HAVE FOLLOWED DFA'S RECOMMENDATION AND TOLD HIM THAT AUSTRALIA WAS PREPARED TO ALLOW THE ARAB LEAGUE TO OPEN AN OFFICE IN AUSTRALIA AND TO ALLOW A MEMBER OF THE OFFICE STAFF TO BE A PLO MEMBER. AS IT WAS, ALL WHITLAM GOT TO SAY WAS THAT IT WAS TOO SOON FOR THE PLO ITSELF TO OPEN AN OFFICE IN AUSTRALIA.

5. COMMENT: IT IS CLEAR THAT PRIME MINISTER WHITLAM INTENDS TO INCREASE CONTACTS WITH THE PLO AND IS SEARCHING FOR A FORMULA WHICH WILL GIVE THE PLO SOME STATUS IN AUSTRALIA SHORT OF FORMAL DIPLOMATIC RECOGNITION. THIS DECISION, WHEN MADE PUBLIC, IS BOUND TO BE CRITICIZED BY VOCAL PRO-ISRAELI ELEMENTS WITHIN THE ALP AND WILL HARDLY HELP THE PRIME MINISTER POLITICALLY.
GREEN

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